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# Inconveniences of a long Continuance

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# PARLIAMENT.

**T**HAT there is a necessity of a Government among Mankind, is admitted by all wise men; but to convince mad men and fools of this, is too great a task. *Johannes Woolebins* in his Compendium, *Theolo. Christ.* says, that it is unworthy in a Christian so much to seem to mistrust the Divine Authority of the Scripture, as to make any question of it. It being a Principle so necessary to be believed, as it ought not to be brought into doubt by Disputes. To the like purpose it may be said that it is unworthy in an English Commonwealths-man, to bring it into debate whether or no the Sovereignty of this Realm be in the King alone, dis-joynd from any other persons; and true it is, there are as yet but few, if any, that dare be so hardy, as positively to say otherwise, whatever their thoughts be, and though their Actions seem to look that way: And forasmuch as the word Commonwealth hath been of late years for the most part applied to the Government when it is in the hands of many: It might not be impertinent to insert here what a Commonwealth is. A Commonwealth therefore is a lawful Government of many Families, and that which unto them in Common belongeth; and the end and design thereof is, that the wicked be punished, and the good and just protected. So that it is as much, nay, rather more a Commonwealth, and tends more to Common good when the Government is in the hand of one man, than in the hands of many; and for this we have the general consent of all great Politicians in past Ages, who after the tryal of all sorts of Governments, and comparing the Conveniences and Inconveniences of each, have concluded that Government best for the generality of the people, when the Sovereign Power to Command was in one man, and not in many: For oftentimes even where a Tyrant hath Reigned, and he removed, and the Commonwealth changed into a popular State, the People have been soon sensible that the change hath been much for the worse, and that instead of one Tyrant they had a multitude of Tyrants to oppress them. Yet the Dissolution or Prorogation of a Parliament hath been of late lookt upon to be so high a violation of Right, and so great a point of mis-government, as if thereby our Liberties were lost, and our Lives and Estates subjugated to the Arbitrary Power and Pleasure of our King; or else we falsely conclude it impossible that the King can be so wise as to Govern without their Counsels. To remove which mistakes, and to quiet the minds of men misled, these following Considerations and Collections out of English History are offered to publick view, whereby it will be most apparent that not only the Proroguing but the frequent Dissolving of Parliaments is absolutely necessary for preservation of Monarchy, our now established Government, and the best sort of Government for the people of *England*, and most suitable to their temper; in preservation whereof, our own preservation consists. But the long continuance of one and the same Parliament, or the same Members in Parliament, which are both alike, is the most pernicious thing imaginable both to King and People.

It is necessary for preservation of Monarchy, that Parliaments be often Dissolved, because nothing makes it more manifest in whom the Sovereign Power resides; for it puts them in mind by what Authority they have their Being, whereas by a long Continuance they are apt to plead prescription to their Seats, and think themselves dis-seized if removed thence, though by the same power that plac'd them there.

In former times, Parliaments in this Kingdom consisted only of some of the Nobility and wise men of the Nation, such as the King pleas'd to Call; and the first time that ever the Commons of *England* were admitted to Parliament, was in the 16th Year of *Henry* the 1st. which Parliament was Assembled at *Salisbury*, and it was so Assembled of the Kings own Pleasure, not of any Obligation that by Law lay upon him so to do. And certain it is, the Kings of *England* were no ways obliged to Assemble Parliaments, or being assembled, to permit them to sit during their own pleasure, till of late Years, that such vapours corrupted our Region with a destructive Contagion. By the Ancient Statutes of *E. 3.* whereby Parliaments were to be holden once a Year, and oftner if need were, cannot by any reasonable construction be intended, so much to oblige



oblige the King to call a Parliament, as to oblige the Subject to attend being call'd, and this seems the rather to be so, for that those Statutes being but briefly penned by a subsequent Statute of R. 2d. (as an Act explanatory of the former Acts) a penalty is imposed upon every person having Summons to Parliament, that should not come accordingly. But now by an Act of the 16th of his now Majesties Reign, he was prevail'd upon to pass it into a Law That Parliaments should not be intermitted or discontinued above three years. However (God be thank'd) it is yet in the Kings power, that if when they are Call'd they behave themselves not well, His Majesty may, without violation of any Law, send them whence they came; and, I hope, it will never more be otherwise, lest that if they had a grant of not being Dissolv'd without their own consent, they would do as those did that had the like power. And sure, it's no Soloecism that the like cause may have the like effect.

A Parliament of the Modern Constitution is without Controversie very necessary and useful, if they intend that which properly belongs to them; the business of both Houses being to consult with, and advise the King in such things as he shall require their advice in, and to represent to him publick grievances, such as are real grievances, and not such as every whimble pated fellow esteems so; but they are not to think to compel the King, under the plausible term of Address, to exercise any point of Government, or to make any new Laws that he likes not of. And it is proper and peculiar to himself only to judg what advice is fit to be followed, and what to be rejected; for there may be some private Reason of State for his so doing, which might be inconvenient to be publickly known. This hath been the ancient settled practice, and under which this Kingdom hath long flourish'd, and it is not safe to alter it, for it being now the declining Age of the World, most Changes (violent ones especially) are from good to bad, and from bad to worst, and from worst to stark naught.

Is not the advantage of Monarchy above the Government of many, apparent at this time to any seeing man, for if His Majesty, like the Main Mast of a Ship, had not been the stay of all, and had not as it were parted the fray by the late Dissolution of the Parliament, all the Aristocratical rigging and tackle of both Houses; if it deserves to be so called, had been torn in pieces by faction amongst themselves, and this poor Kingdom thereby ere this, might have been a second time in our memory blown up by her own inbred Divisions, and it is not without precedent, that Parliaments are alike infallible as the Pope, or his Colledg of Cardinals, and have given as ill advice, and done as ill things, and of late have been more troublesome than ever.

If it should be so that the advice of either or both Houses of Parliament must of necessity be followed by the King, then would it not be properly an advice but a command in effect; and where in a Commonwealth the Sovereign power or Command is in more than in one, that Commonwealth is no longer a Monarchy, but is degenerated at best into an Aristocracy, the Sovereignty being thereby divided amongst many, and if we judg impartially, it must be acknowledged that they that endeavour after that (*viz.*) that the Votes and Ordinances of the House of Commons might have the force of Laws, are no less Enemies to the State than they that would introduce Popery, for in both Cases it is but endeavouring to alter the Government; to prevent which fond and dangerous attempt, the frequent Dissolving of Parliaments is very necessary.

Divers other Inconveniences will be prevented by frequent Proroguing and Dissolving of Parliaments; for by that means the privilege of Parliaments will not over long protect the Members thereof to delay and defraud their fellow Subjects of their just and due Debts; which sort of practice for many years past hath been a killing oppression, when not only the Members themselves made ill Use of that privilege, but many of them gave their Clerks Liberty to sell blank Protections by the dozens, as the Pope doth his Indulgences. And moreover if any such, or other like vicious man, should by flattery and bribery get into the Parliament, a Dissolution gives opportunity of discharging such from having hand in so high a Trust; and great reason such should be discharged; for how can it be expected that men unjust in their private concerns should be otherwise in publick Administration, which they will always strive to make subservient to their bie-Interests?

By the long continuance of one and the same Parliament, it hath happened, that the Members thereof having long beheld the tempting, though forbidden fruit of Supremacy, they have not scrupled to grapple with the King for a share of the Sovereignty; and most commonly when they are a little settled they strive to spoil the King of his Prerogative to usurp it to themselves; and rather than fail of their designs, time hath been that they have involv'd the people of this Kingdom in a miserable War and Destruction of each other, when the thing they seem'd to insist on, was either of no moment at all to the people, or something that had a very remote possibility of ever happening; whereby instead of preventing the mischief, they drew it hastily upon us. There are too many examples hereof in History, whereof to name a few: Let it be Impartially consider'd, and then judg if there was a justifiable Cause for the Insolency of that Parliament in Edw. the 2d's time, who being set on by some Lords that envied Gavestons favour with that King, framed Articles of some trifling grievances to be presented to the King, but  
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added thereunto, the King must banish *Gascon*, else they declar'd they would rise in Arms against the King. An Action much to the credit of Parliaments indeed, that they to gratifie an envious Lord or two, would not stick to stir up the Plague of a Civil War in the bowels of their own Country, by engaging in a Rebellion against the King! And they proceeded so far that they murdered *Gascon* instead of bringing him to a fair and Legal Tryal, for no reason in particular that appears by *Bakers Chronicle*, other than that the King lov'd him, and that he was in more favour than they; and not long after they e'ne Depos'd the King, and yet no intrenchment upon the peoples Liberty or Property was committed by that King in all his Reign, and it is expressly said of him he took no base Courses for raising money. And although being forc'd to resign his Crown, he was content to live a prive Life, and did so very quietly, yet his Seditious Lords thought his Liberty too much favour for him, and caus'd him to be imprison'd; and in carrying to Prison he was most barbarously abused, for being taken from his Horse, and set upon a Hillock, and there taking puddle water to shave him with, his Barber told him, Cold water must serve for that time, whereat the miserable King looking earnestly upon him, told him; that whither they would or no, he would have warm water to wash withal; and to make good his words, he let fall a showre of tears: and being carried to Prison, they lodg'd him in a Chamber over Carrion and dead Carcasses, thinking thereby to have poyson'd him: But when they saw that would not do, a Letter was devis'd from a Lord to the Kings Keepers, blaming them, for giving him too much Liberty, and for not doing the service that was expected from them, and in the end of the Letter was wrote this Line. *Edwardum Occidere nolite timere bonum est*. Which may be Englisht either, It is good to kill *Edward*, do not fear it; or do not kill *Edward*, it is good to be afraid to do it: But they took it in the sense intended, and most inhumanly murdered the King. And (to see the fickleness of them) it is Recorded, that they that despis'd him when living so honour'd him being dead, that they could have found in their hearts to have made him a Saint.

It cannot yet be forgot, nor will the ill effects a while be overcome of that Parliament, infamous for long, and of sad and direful memory, How in the time of the best of Kings, when they all rul'd, there was no rule at all, but that upon pretence of removing evil Counsellors, they remov'd from us all happiness, and overwhelm'd us with all the evils imaginable; and because some people would make the world believe there's no preservation against Popery but by means of a Parliament, be it remembred how poorly and sneakingly the Parliament in *Queen Maries* days, became Apostates to the Protestant Religion, drew up a supplication to the King and Queen, wherein they shew'd themselves very penitent for their former errors, and humbly desired their Majesties to intercede for them to *Cardinal Pool* the Popes Legate, and the Sea Apostolick, that they might be pardoned of all they had done amiss. and be received into the bosom of the Church, being themselves most ready to abrogate all Laws prejudicial to the Sea of *Rome*: That this is no Fable, they that list may read it in *Bakers Chronicle*. fol. 320.

Is it not apparent that what Execution hath been done upon the late Popish Plotters was by the Kings immediate Command? And the discoverers of Plotters, and prosecutors of Papists are to this day encouraged by his Majesty. Were not the Lords in the Tower several times brought to *Westminster-Hall*, by the Kings Command, in order to their Tryal, but the House of Commons, were not, or would not be ready for it, unless they might pluck a plume from the Prerogative, or Peerage, to feather their own Caps withal? And whither they were not more ready to kindle Coals of contention, when even in the House, not long since, some laid hands on their Swords to draw at each other; I leave the World to judg. Can any man then that loves the peace of his Country, be troubled at the Prorogation or Dissolution of such a Parliament.

It is indeed to be found in our *English Chronicles*, that one Parliament had the name of good, and that was in the Reign of *Edw.* the 3d. but it seems to be so called in derision only; for the same Author says, they wrought ill effects; to be more plain, there seldom or never was a long Parliament that did deserve much commendation, or that was free from Faction: But that it was not otherwise, much may be imputed to the fault of the Electors, who take not right measures in their choice. And because good Parliaments are very useful to His Majesty and People, it is to be wisht men would observe the right means to obtain such, whenever it should please His Majesty to give another opportunity of a new Choice: and forasmuch as many of the Commons of our late Parliaments were so vile as to take pensions for their Votes, as some of their own-Fellow-Members give out, which if true, in all likelihood were given by some corrupt Minister of State to promote the interest and designs of some Forreign Prince, and some others of them were under very gross errors touching Succession, whither out of a real mis-apprehension, or through a voluntary mis-feasance, it is not proper here to determine. Only this I say, it is somewhat strange, that men that are all for Religion, will not trust God Almighty himself with that Prerogative, though he gives us his word for it *That the hearts of Kings are in his Rule and Governance, and turneth them which way it pleaseth him*; and in another place it is said, *By me Kings Reign, and Princes do Decree*: But of this more perhaps hereafter. Some others are mightily enraged at their Dissolution, because it hath put them to charges at their new Elections, and



perhaps by the intermission of a Parliament were forc'd to pay some of their debts. These sort of men, if they meet again, unless they are become Converts, will in all likelihood be doing mischief; therefore it would be well, that not one suspected of such miscarriages should be ever chose again. There can be no Inconvenience in changing, for there is no Country or place but what hath several men fitter to be Parliament men than those; and the new men may the better, and in more likelihood act for the good of the Nation than the old ones; for these will meet without any private prejudice or pre-engagement in any Faction.

It cannot well be expected there should ever be a good Parliament as long as men will be misled to their choice by extravagancy of expence, therefore they would do well to consider what will a belly full of Ale signifie in recompence of their peace, it will be but like *Esau's* selling his birth-right for a mess of Pottage; neither ought the recommendation of any great man have any influence upon our choice; but the good qualifications of the person ought only to be respected.

Mens care in this concern is of very great Consequence, for a great Politician says it, That it is more dangerous to the publick when there's an evil Council and a good King, than when there's an evil King, but a good Council; and that we may always have a good Council, above all other rules, Gods own direction for the choice of a Council in *Israel* ought to be followed, *Assemble unto me, saith he, seventy of the most ancient of the people, wise men fearing God, Deut. cap. 1.* It is of dangerous consequence when the people have a slight opinion of the parts and abilities of their Council; therefore it is that old and not young men ought to be chose into this great Council; for most men are apt to think slightly of those of alike Age with themselves, and though some young men may be good and vertuous, yet the heat and vigour of their youth and blood is apt to transport them into passion, and to too violent a prosecution of what their unripe and unexperienc'd Judgments dictate. *Solon* therefore forbade any young man to be admitted into the Senate, seem'd he never so wise.

To conclude. God grant the Great Council the Parliament, whether the present or a new one, that when they meet next, they may remember it is great grace and favour in the King to Advise or Consult with them at any time, and therefore may they not insist upon what belongs not to them, but render to *Cæsar* the things that are *Cæsar's*, and to God the things that are God's, and then God will bless both our King and us. Amen.

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